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ABSTRACT

Values are a central concept in understanding and predicting human behavior. Value priority differences have been shown to predict important political, social, and economic attitudes and behaviors. The purpose of this study was to identify differences and similarities among the value hierarchies of adolescents who have never tried alcohol, adolescents who tried alcohol a few times, adolescents who used alcohol regularly, and adolescents who were heavy users of alcohol. A large written questionnaire was administered to a sample of 5,435 adolescents from grades 6-12 in the rural inland northwest. The questionnaire assessed reported alcohol usage, selected demographic information, plus terminal and instrumental values with the Rokeach Value Survey. Numerous statistically significant differences were found in the value hierarchies of adolescents who reported using different levels of alcohol. The priority placed on 15 of 18 terminal values and 11 of 18 instrumental values were statistically significant in differentiating the four groups of adolescents. The results of this study clearly outlined strong value differences among adolescents who abstain from alcohol, those who have experimented, those who are regular users, and those who are heavy users. The more adolescents reported using alcohol the more emphasis they placed on self-centered or personally oriented terminal values and the more emphasis they placed on self-actualizing or competence instrumental values. (Author/ABL)

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Alcohol Abstainers, Experimenters, Regular and Heavy Users: Value Differences Among Rural Adolescents

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Abstract

Values are a central concept in understanding and predicting human behavior. Value priority differences have been shown to predict important political, social, and economic attitudes and behaviors. The purpose of this study is to identify differences and similarities among the value hierarchies of adolescents who have never tried alcohol, adolescents who tried alcohol a few times, adolescents who used alcohol regularly (monthly or weekly), and adolescents who are heavy users of alcohol (daily). A large written questionnaire was administered to a sample of 5435 adolescents from grades 6 through 12 in the rural inland northwest. The questionnaire assessed reported alcohol usage, selected demographic information, plus terminal and instrumental values with the Rokeach Value Survey. Numerous statistically significant differences were found in the value hierarchies of adolescents who reported using different levels of alcohol. The priority placed on 15 of 18 terminal values and 11 of 18 instrumental values were statistically significant in differentiating the four groups of adolescents. The findings are discussed in terms of Rokeach's belief system theory and their implications for understanding some of the causes of alcohol abuse.

How do you know if you are hooked on drugs? We must win the war on drugs. Just say no! Drug use is a repudiation of everything America is. Zero tolerance. Questions, statements, and policies such as these are commonly discussed by the media, by political figures, and by researchers in this country today (e.g. Gelman et. al., 1989; Goode, 1989; Newcomb & Bentler, 1989). The United States is a drug culture (Newcomb & Bentler, 1989). Public opinion polls indicate that Americans believe that drugs are the most important issue facing America today (Goode, 1989). Drug use and drug abuse is a multifaceted phenomenon that is initiated and maintained for a wide range of reasons (e.g. Goode, 1989; Newcomb & Bentler, 1989). One psychological dimension which may prove useful in understanding drug use and abuse is human values.

Values are enduring beliefs that specific modes of conduct or end-states of existence are personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence (Rokeach, 1973). Values are central in importance in an individual's personality and they transcend attitudes, ideology, evaluations, judgments, justifications, etc. Values serve as standards and are general plans for conflict resolution and decision making. Values also serve motivational functions. An individual's value system involves an enduring organization of these beliefs concerning preferable modes of conduct or end-states of existence along a continuum of relative importance.

Rokeach (1973, 1979) has identified 18 specific ends values which he refers to as terminal values. These ultimate goals or

end states include family security, a world at peace, a sense of accomplishment, and salvation. Rokeach has also identified 18 specific means or instrumental values which are the desirable modes of behavior which help us attain our terminal values. These idealized modes of conduct include behaving honestly, helpfully, obediently and independently.

The inclusion of values as either independent or dependent variables in drug use research has been occurring for some time on a limited basis. Value differences between various use levels have been investigated for alcohol use (Martini & Brook, 1978), marijuana use (Kimlicka and Cross ,1978), hard drug use (Cochrane, 1974), and polydrug use (Brook & Whitehead, 1983).

Martini, J.L. and Brook, R. C. (1978) investigated the value differences of 92 self labeled alcoholics and 26 self labeled nonalcoholics who were clients at a Addiction Research Foundation clinic in Ontario Canada. The values of these two client groups were also compared to the values of therapists practicing at various agencies within the area. This study did identify a few value differences between therapists and alcoholics but even fewer differences between alcoholics and nonalcoholics.

Kimlicka and Cross (1978) assessed the values of a convenient sample of 52 chronic marijuana users (daily use for at least one year) and 31 casual marijuana users (use between 1 and 3 times per week). While this study identified differences for 2 values, the interpretation of the results clearly reflect value similarities as being more important than the differences between the two levels of marijuana usage.

Cochrane (1974) studied value differences between a convenient sample of 31 regular users of hard drugs at Michigan State University. The drug users in this study held different values for 7 terminal and 5 instrumental values when compared to a matched control group. Hard drug users placed significantly higher priorities on the values of equality, inner harmony, a world of beauty, being loving and imaginative while placing significantly lower priorities on the values of national security, salvation, being ambitious, clean, and obedient. Cochrane (1974) interpreted these value differences as a rejection of the middle class ethic of hard work plus a rejection of forces that lead to the restriction of the self.

Brook and Whitehead (1983) assessed the value hierarchies of 64 adolescent polydrug users who sought treatment at a therapeutic community. The values of these polydrug users were compared to the values of a nondrug using high school control group (n=24) and to the values of a sample of the parents of the drug users (n=45). The drug abusers placed a significantly higher priority on the values of inner harmony, salvation, and being clean and significant lower priorities on the values of happiness, being cheerful and responsible than their peer comparison group. The drug abusers were more self centered and personalistic in their value orientations when compared to their parents.

These studies have identified some value differences between individuals who have been identified as using a range of drugs at various levels. Comparing the studies becomes difficult since

individuals select to use various drugs for different reasons and therefore users of one drug may in fact possess values which are very different than users of other drugs. It is also likely that a lack of strong differences and a lack of consistency among the findings across these studies is the result of a range of methodological issues. The assessment of individuals within a treatment facility can easily create the demand for socially desirable responses and reduce potential differences between groups. Small sample sizes is also an issue for these studies. In addition, none of these studies assessed a wide range of usage across its target population.

The purpose of this study is to identify differences and similarities among the value hierarchies of adolescents who report differing levels of usage of alcohol. Many of the concerns regarding the previously mentioned value and drug research will be dealt with by using a large sample from the general adolescent population, by a procedure designed to reduce the issue of socially desirably among the respondents, and by including a wide range of alcohol use levels for value hierarchy comparisons.

METHOD

Participants

The participants in this study were 5435 adolescents from 31 different schools in a five county region of north central Idaho (Clearwater, Idaho, Latah, Lewis, and Nez Perce) and a three county region of southeastern Washington (Asotin, Garfield, and

Whitman). A total of 52.3% of the participants were male and 47.7% were female. The majority of the participants were Caucasian (89.5%) with 5% being Native American Indian and less than 6% of the remainder being either Asian, Black, or Hispanic. Seventh graders made up 12.4% of the sample, 8th graders 21%, 9th graders 14.2%, 10th graders 16.8%, 11th graders 18% and 12th graders 16.8% of the total sample. Except for two larger schools in the study which selected representative courses across all ability levels for the administration of the questionnaire, all students present in the school on the day of the administration were given the questionnaire to complete. Only a handful of the students present refused to do so. The number of students absent plus those refusing to complete the questionnaire varied between 2% and 8% of the official enrollment of each school.

Design

This study utilized a large 12 page written questionnaire which was administered as part of the needs assessment phase of a Drug Education Infusion Grant funded by the U. S. Department of Education. The questionnaires were anonymously administered to adolescents during school time in the spring of 1988. The items on the questionnaire assessed a range of demographic information, drug usage levels over the previous six months, attitudes towards drugs and their usage, perception of community use levels, basic knowledge about drugs, other selected risk factors and general values. Of particular concern for this paper are the terminal and instrumental values as assessed by the Rokeach Value Survey (Form G) and the reported levels of alcohol usage.

Instrumentation

The Rokeach Value Survey - Form G (RVS) requires respondents to separately rank 18 terminal values (end-states) and 18 instrumental values (modes of conduct) according to their importance as a guiding principle in their lives. The highest value is assigned a 1, the second highest value a number 2, and this process continues until the lowest value is assigned the number 18.

The adolescents indicated whether over the last 6 months they had used alcohol without doctor's orders on a five point scale. Respondents completed this scale by circling either never, a few times, once a month, once a week, or once or more a day. Respondents who indicated they had never used alcohol were assigned to the abstainer group. Respondents who indicated they had tried alcohol a few times were assigned to the experimenters group. Respondents who indicated they had used alcohol either monthly or weekly were assigned to the regular users group and daily users were assigned to the heavy users group.

RESULTS

The composite ranks for the terminal value hierarchies and the instrumental value hierarchies were determined for each of the four alcohol use groups using the median rankings given by the respective group members. When the medians for any particular pair of values were equal, the means for the pair were consulted to derive the group hierarchies. The terminal value hierarchies for the adolescent alcohol abstainers, experimenters,

regular users, and heavy users are presented in Table 1. The instrumental value hierarchies for these same groups are presented in Table 2.

Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here

A total of 36 separate Kruskal-Wallis nonparametric one-way analysis of variance tests were completed for each terminal and instrumental value across the four groups. A total of 15 of the terminal values and 11 of the 18 instrumental values reached significance at least at the .05 level. These values which significantly differentiated the four groups are presented in Tables 1 and 2 in boldface print.

Mann-Whitney U tests were performed for each possible paired comparison within the groups for each of the 26 values which had significant results using the Kruskal-Wallis test. Significant Mann-Whitney U tests are also noted in Tables 1 and 2. Each pair of group composite ranks within each row of either table which are immediately followed by identical letters are significantly different at the indicated levels.

Alcohol Abstainers vs. Alcohol Users

Adolescents who indicated they abstained from using alcohol within the last six months placed significantly higher priorities on the terminal values of salvation and a world at peace while placing significantly lower priorities on a comfortable life, social recognition, an exciting life, mature love, and pleasure when compared to the three alcohol user groups. Adolescent

alcohol abstainers placed significantly higher priorities on the instrumental values of being helpful and forgiving while placing significantly lower priorities on the values of being ambitious, independent, and broadminded when compared to the other three groups.

Heavy users of alcohol or adolescents who indicated they consumed alcohol at least once a day differed from abstainers, experimenters, and regular users on eight values. Heavy users placed significantly higher priorities on the terminal values of an exciting life, freedom, mature love, and pleasure and a significantly lower priority on the value of health than each of the other groups. Heavy users placed significantly higher priorities on the instrumental values of being broadminded and imaginative and lower priority on the value of being honest than the other groups.

Alcohol Abstainers vs. Heavy Users

Alcohol abstainers and heavy users significantly differed from each other as groups on 10 terminal values. Heavy users held terminal value hierarchies which stressed freedom, a comfortable life, an exciting life, mature love, pleasure, and social recognition more than abstainers. The terminal value hierarchies of abstainers stressed health, family security, a world at peace, and salvation more than heavy users. Thus, it appears than the value hierarchies of heavy users stress more self-centered or personal terminal values while alcohol abstainers stress more of the society-centered terminal values.

Alcohol abstainers and heavy users significantly differed

from each other as groups on 9 instrumental values. Heavy users held instrumental value hierarchies which stressed being loving, ambitious, clean, independent, broadminded, and imaginative more than abstainers. Alcohol abstainers stressed being honest, helpful, and forgiving more than heavy users. Thus, abstainers seem to place higher priorities on moral values while heavy users tend to stress competence or self-actualization instrumental values.

Experimental Users

Besides the previously mentioned differences between alcohol abstainers and the three other groups, experimenters who tried alcohol a few times tended to be more like the abstainers than the regular and heavy users of alcohol. The few exceptions to this trend are that the abstainers placed significantly higher priorities on equality, a world of beauty, and being obedient and significantly lower priorities on being loving and clean than the experimenters did. Experimenters did not differ from abstainers while both groups valued family security, self-respect, a wold at peace, wisdom, national security, being honest and polite more than regular and/or heavy alcohol users. In a similar fashion, experimenters and abstainers did not differ from each other but placed lower priorities on the values of freedom and being loving than did the regular and/or heavy user groups.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study clearly outline strong value differences between the values held by adolescents who abstain

from using alcohol, adolescents who have experimented with alcohol, adolescents who are regular users of alcohol, and adolescents who are heavy users of alcohol. Consistent patterns in the progressive differences among the four levels of reported usage reflect strong linear trends. The more adolescents report using alcohol the more emphasis they place on self-centered or personally-oriented terminal values and the more emphasis they place on self-actualizing or competence instrumental values. The less adolescents report using alcohol the more emphasis they place on society-oriented terminal values and the more emphasis they place on moral instrumental values. This interpretation is consistent with conventional wisdom about alcohol users and abusers. It is also consistent with some of the findings regarding values and drug usage reported previously (e.g. Brook & Whitehead, 1983; Cochrane, 1974; Martini & Brook,1978).

The knowledge of significant value differences among adolescents across levels of alcohol usage has important implications for both alcohol prevention and treatment programs. Ball-Rokeach, Rokeach, and Grube (1984) have reviewed the research on value change and its subsequent impact on attitudes and behaviors. Their review clearly demonstrates that changing values is possible using a self confrontation procedure and that these value changes result in changes in related attitudes and behaviors. Conroy (1979) demonstrated that by changing the priorities placed on the values of broadmindedness and self-discipline cigarette decreased their smoking behavior significantly. Future research using the self confrontational

procedure with different levels of alcohol users may be very fruitful. Given the seriousness of the heavy use of alcohol on our youth, the value differences reported in this study, and the implications of the self confrontation approach to value change, the design of value change research should be a high priority on the agenda of alcohol researchers interested in prevention and treatment.

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Table 1

Composite Ranks for Terminal Value Hierarchies of High School Students

Terminal Value	Never Tried Alcohol (n=1308)	Tried Alcohol A Few Times (n=1735)	Used Alcohol Regularly (n=1592)	Used Alcohol Daily (n=117)
TRUE FRIENDSHIP	1	2	1	5
HEALTH	2 a	1 bc	3 be	7 ace
FAMILY SECURITY	3 ac	4 bd	8 ab	9 cd
FREEDOM	4 a	3 b	2 c	3 abc
SELF-RESPECT	5 f	6 a	5 aef	8 e
A COMFORTABLE LIFE	6 abc	5 a	4 b	4 c
A WORLD AT PEACE	7 ae	7 b	12 ab	11 e
WISDOM	8 a	9 e	11 ae	10
A SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT	9	10	10	12
SALVATION	10 abc	18 ad	16 bd	18 c
AN EXCITING LIFE	11 a	8 a	6 a	1 a
EQUALITY	12 ae	13 be	14 ab	14
MATURE LOVE	13 a	11 a	7 a	2 a
PLEASURE	14 ab	12 ab	9 ae	6 be
INNER HARMONY	15	15	15	15
A WORLD OF BEAUTY	16 a<u>e</u>	16 be	17 abf	16 f
SOCIAL RECOGNITION	17 abe	14 e	13 a	13 b
NATIONAL SECURITY	18 <u>b</u>	17 a	18 ab	17

Groups were significantly different for values in boldface type. Group composite ranks followed by identical letters are significantly different. In case of identical composite ranks the letter for the group with the highest priority is underlined.

Table 2

Composite Ranks for Instrumental Value Hierarchies

Instrumental Value	Never Tried Alcohol (n=1509)	Tried Alcohol A Few Times (n=1747)	Used Alcohol Regularly (n=1591)	Used Alcohol Daily (n=117)
HONEST	1 ad	1 b<u>e</u>	1 cde	4 abc
LOVING	2 ef	2 <u>e</u>	2	1 f
RESPONSIBLE	3	3	3	6
LOYAL	4	4	5	3
AMBITIOUS	5 aef	5 <u>e</u>	4 a	2 f
HELPFUL	6 abe	9 cef	13 ac	13 bf
FORGIVING	7 aef	8 be	10 ab	11 f
POLITE	8 a	7 b	11 ab	10
SELF-CONTROLLED	9	6	7	8
CLEAN	11 ae	10 a	8	7 e
COURAGEOUS	10	12	12	12
INDEPENDENT	12 abe	11 af	6 bf	9 e
BROADMINDED	13 abe	13 c<u>e</u>	9 bd	5 acd
CAPABLE	14	14	14	14
OBEDIENT	15 ab	16 ac	18 bcd	18 <u>d</u>
INTELLECTUAL	16	15	15	17
LOGICAL	17	18	17	16
IMAGINATIVE	18 ab	17 c	16 ad	15 bcd

Groups were significantly different for values in boldface type. Group composite ranks followed by identical letters are significantly different. In case of identical composite ranks the letter for the group with the highest priority is underlined.